

# Gypsy moth numbers heavy this spring

By Nathan Falk  
Leader Reporter

Populations are growing in the area, but not the kind of populations that are welcome.

Gypsy moth populations in the towns of Wescott and Washington, the Legend Lake area, and at Berry Lake are at very high levels this season, according to the DNR.

"It's a big issue right now, and people are upset about it — I've had many, many phone calls," said Derek Sokoloski, forester/ranger with the Keshena Ranger Station.

Caterpillar activity is expected to peak this week and next in the Shawano area before the caterpillars begin to pupate and turn into adult moths. Populations have exploded due to the warm and dry spring weather, which increased caterpillar survival by reducing diseases.

"The spring moisture levels were not enough for a bacteria that usually affects the bug to get a foothold — the caterpillars just took over," Sokoloski said.

When the caterpillars

are abundant, they can be a tremendous nuisance, eat all of a tree's leaves, and may kill the tree. Gypsy moth caterpillars prefer to feed on oak, aspen, birch, crabapple, and willow.

Besides the Menominee Reservation, Sokoloski handles forestry for the towns of Washington and Wescott.

"Pretty much in Wescott and the northwest corner of Washington where the oak is, many trees don't have leaves right now," he said. "Some of the worst areas are just south of Legend Lake in Menominee County. There are whole stretches, and many square miles are devastated."

Defoliation stresses trees, but healthy trees will normally produce a replacement set of leaves within a few weeks. Replacement leaves are small and shiny. Trees that are in poor health or are already stressed often die after one year of heavy defoliation. Landowners may wish to cut down defoliated trees in the belief that they have been killed,

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## Gypsy moth prevention

Gypsy moth caterpillars are black with a series of blue and red dots running down their backs.

People can help prevent further defoliation and devastation. Here's some tips:

- Use physical controls (such as burlap bands and crushing caterpillars), insecticidal soap and insecticides to control the caterpillars.

- Treatment of large trees with insecticide to prevent heavy defoliation will require the services of a tree service or pest control company.

- Crush pupae and adult female moths with a stick once they are present in late June and July.

More information on control methods is available at [www.gypsymoth.wi.gov](http://www.gypsymoth.wi.gov).



## Moth

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out should wait to make any cutting arrangements because the trees are probably still alive.

It is too late to do any aerial spraying this year. Homeowners interested in aerial spraying next spring should contact their town government or lake association. Landowners also can contact the county government if they own more than 20 acres.

"They can determine when and where to implement aerial spray programs," Sokoloski said. "If town officials know of outbreaks this year, egg mass surveys can be done in the fall to determine where best to allocate aerial spraying projects next spring."

Another insect called "eastern tent caterpillar"

is often mistaken for the gypsy moth. Eastern tent caterpillars make a white, webbed nest in the tree and the caterpillars have a white stripe running down their backs. Gypsy moth caterpillars do not make a white nest or tent, and do not have a white stripe on their bodies.

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